

Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs Submission to the Inquiry into Substance Abuse in Australian Communities

National School Drug Education Strategy

Introduction

This submission focuses on Commonwealth activities in school drug education and the management by schools of drug issues. It anticipates that other submissions will provide detail on the significant economic and social costs of substance abuse.

Harmful drug use in our society continues to be a major source of concern to its members and there is a clear demand for the issue to be broadly addressed. All governments recognise that there is a real need to provide a safe environment for young people, including school students, and to address parents' concerns about the impact of drugs on their families. It is vital that Australia's young people, and those who work and interact with them, have the information, strategies and skills to prevent or reduce the harm that can arise from their own drug use and the drug use of others.

For school students, drug use may adversely affect not only their physical and emotional health but also their chances of maintaining a current and life-long connection with education, achieving their full potential academically and living fulfilled and well adjusted lives.

The potential adverse health effects of all drugs, including alcohol and tobacco and other substances such as inhalants, are well documented. It is of concern that there is evidence of drug use among school students in, for example, the 1998 report *Australian Secondary Students' Use of Over-the-Counter and Illicit substances in 1996*, prepared by the Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer, Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria. It is therefore important to take action to enhance young peoples' resilience and prevent drug experimentation and usage and to determine methods to deal with drug related incidents and associated harm in schools.

Schools acknowledge, both in principle and in practice, their partnership role with others in the wider community in ensuring a safe school environment and the implementation of curriculum, policy and programmes, including the provision of student welfare services.

Schools are clearly a critical focus point for drug education but the messages delivered in schools need to be reinforced and supported by parents and the wider community.

A list of acronyms used in this submission is included at page 9.

Whole of Government Approach to School Drug Education

Tough on Drugs in Schools

The Council of Australian Governments agreed in April 1999 to strengthen its attack on drug pushers and its response to drug use within schools through the development of enhanced protocols at a national level and associated supporting materials for management of drug issues and drug related incidents in schools.

National School Drug Education Strategy

The National School Drug Education Strategy forms one of a number of National Drug Action Plans to be developed under the National Drug Strategic Framework. The Plans set out the priorities for reducing the harm arising from the use of licit and illicit drugs; strategies for taking action on these priorities; and performance indicators.

The National School Drug Education Strategy was developed on the basis of a collaborative, intersectoral coordinated approach to drug education and reflects consideration of the issues raised by stakeholder groups in the initial consultations. It is consistent with the principles set out in the National Drug Strategic Framework and the Strategy's activities are underpinned by a list of principles set out in the Strategy document.

This Strategy recognises that States and Territories have primary responsibility for management and delivery of school drug education and have strategies in place for the delivery of school drug education and the management of drug related issues and incidents in their jurisdictions.

A copy of the National School Drug Education Strategy which was launched by the Hon Trish Worth, MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs on 25 May 1999, is attached.

Goal

The goal of the National School Drug Education Strategy is 'no illicit drugs in schools'.

The National School Drug Education Strategy strengthens the provision of educational programmes and supportive environments which contribute to the goal of 'no illicit drugs in schools'. This goal is based on the belief that illicit and other unsanctioned drug use in schools is unacceptable. The focus is on educational outcomes. Assisting students with drug related problems and deterring the presence and use of unsanctioned drugs in schools are also issues to be addressed under the Strategy.

Objectives

1. Support the development of safe school environments for Australian school students.
2. In conjunction with students, parents, related agencies and the broader school community, develop initiatives, programmes and guidelines to support and enhance State and Territory drug education strategies.
3. Identify, disseminate and promote the use of good practice models of school drug education policies, programmes, curriculum and resources.
4. Enhance the range of drug education curriculum materials and resources.
5. Enhance the professional practice of teachers and school support staff and support the training of pre-service teachers.
6. In partnership with other stakeholders such as health, inform, engage and involve parents about drug related issues.
7. Observing community cultural protocols and in conjunction with students, parents and the broader school community, identify areas of particular need and provide strategies for regions and /or targeted groups.
8. Maintain and strengthen the role of research in the development and delivery of school drug education programmes and ensure that school aged children are included in other relevant research under the National Drug Strategy.

National Advisory Committee on School Drug Education (NACSDE)

The NACSDE is one of the expert advisory committees established to provide a range of expert advice to the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy (MCDS). NACSDE provides expert advice to the Commonwealth Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, and through the Minister to the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), on the development and implementation of the National School Drug Education Strategy. The Committee also reports to the MCDS through the Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs and works closely with the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD).

Terms of Reference for NACSDE

NACSDE will:

- Provide expert advice and direction to the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs and through the Minister to the MCEETYA, on the development and implementation of a National School Drug Education Strategy.
- Monitor, review and evaluate the progress of the National School Drug Education Strategy in the light of emerging issues relating to drugs and associated drug education, both nationally and internationally and provide timely advice regarding strategic intervention as required.
- Provide high level expert advice to the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy through the IGCD and work closely with the ANCD.
- Provide reports to ANCD, the MCDS, the MCEETYA or Council of Australian Governments as required.

Membership of NACSDE

Membership includes individuals representing:

- Secondary principals
- Primary principals
- State Education Departments (2)
- State Health Departments
- Catholic School Systems
- Independent School Systems
- Teachers of Health, Physical Education and Recreation
- Teachers - Government and Non-Government (3)
- Parents - Government sector
- Parents - Non-Government
- Indigenous
- Law Enforcement
- Youth
- Other Community Representatives (2)
- The Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
- The Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care

Implementation

The Commonwealth and the States and Territories will work together with key stakeholders to develop the detailed implementation of measures to help schools respond to illicit drug use. Total funding of \$27.3 million over four years will be provided for these measures under the education component of the National Illicit Drug Strategy. The Government has

provided approximately \$18 million over four years to 2002-03 through the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs to develop and implement the National School Drug Education Strategy. Additional funding of \$9.3 million over four years is being provided by the Commonwealth for the Tough on Drugs in Schools measures agreed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

Under the Strategy funding is available for State and Territory projects and, in addition a proportion of funding each financial year is available for directed, discretionary, nationally strategic projects. These are primarily in relation to key areas identified by the Commonwealth, including informing and involving parents, school and community partnerships, research, evaluation and addressing the needs of targeted groups and regions.

All these activities are described in more detail in the following paragraphs.

State and Territory Projects

The Commonwealth has signed contracts with all State and Territory education authorities for projects under the National School Drug Education Strategy. Each State and Territory has established a cross-sectoral School Drug Education Coordinating Committee to develop and manage the projects to ensure the involvement of all school sectors, teacher and professional associations, parent organisations, health and law enforcement agencies and other community groups. Descriptions of the projects are contained in the following table.

State	Description of project	Funding
NSW	Initiatives that support school based drug education and parent and community involvement. The focus is on primary education, policy and practice, parent and community partnerships, lighthouse grants, information dissemination and research.	\$1,204,560
VIC	Research projects that extend and enhance activities under the Victorian Government's <i>Turning the Tide</i> initiative on areas such as effective drug education, peer drug education, responding to illicit drug use, tobacco education and Koori drug education.	\$882,000
QLD	Strong emphasis on professional development for teachers and principals, through the development of resources and research on baseline performance data.	\$720,000
SA	The implementation of whole school community approaches and supporting professional development for teachers including the development of drug education guidelines, dissemination of best practice and information programmes for parents.	\$429,840
WA	Focuses on school and community partnerships through a School Community Grant Scheme and a School Community Transition project.	\$456,384
TAS	Focuses on school and community partnerships through the establishment of school community demonstration projects and the subsequent development of models for use by other schools.	\$232,056
NT	Innovative project on the delivery of drug education in rural/remote Aboriginal communities and support activities in the urban context.	\$185,880
ACT	Development of whole school approaches to drug education, by the means of school drug education strategies for self identified schools.	\$209,280

National Strategic Projects

Projects identified to date include:

Identification of, and guidelines for implementing performance management processes for State and Territory School Drug Education Projects.

The project will identify processes for establishing evidence of change and the mechanisms through which this could be measured.

Review of Pre-Service teacher training in school drug education

A national review of the current arrangements in pre-service teacher training in school drug education and from the findings of the review, development of an action plan which identifies areas to be addressed.

Review of the Principles for Drug Education in Schools.

Review the 1994 “Principles for Drug Education in Schools”. The Principles were developed as a collaborative initiative of the States, Territories and Commonwealth. The *National School Drug Education Strategy* provides an opportunity to revisit these principles to ensure that they continue to provide a relevant basis for drug education programmes in Australia.

Effective Implementation Practice in Relation to School Drug Education.

While successful education programmes dealing with alcohol and tobacco are reasonably well known, the impact of educational programmes on illicit drugs are more problematic. This project will conduct a scoping study to consider what works, what does not work and what holds promise in school education programmes on illicit drugs.

Rethinking Drinking

Adaptation of a drug education resource (*Rethinking Drinking*) to be developed for Indigenous communities.

Australian School Students Alcohol and Drugs Supplementary School Factor Survey

Collation and analysis of the data on school drug education, policies and procedures collected by the School Factor Survey.

National Good Practice Dissemination

A national project to facilitate sharing of information and training across jurisdictions. The project aims to bring together the various resources that are being developed by the National School Drug Education Strategy and the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) ‘Tough on Drugs in Schools’ initiatives and to highlight best practice approaches being implemented by the various education jurisdictions around Australia.

Professional Development for Support Workers in remote Indigenous Communities

Professional development activities for education support workers in remote Indigenous communities on the delivery of school drug education.

COAG agreed “Tough on Drugs in Schools” measures

The Commonwealth is providing additional funding of \$9.3 million over four years to increase the capacity of schools and school communities to respond to illicit drug use.

This funding focuses on three key areas: development and dissemination of enhanced protocols for managing drugs in schools on a national basis; educational materials for use in schools and the delivery of local school-community drug summits.

A Taskforce reporting to the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training (MCEETYA) and Youth Affairs has developed a national framework for school protocols as an effective way to enhance these protocols on a national basis.

MCEETYA endorsed the *National Framework for Protocols for Managing The Possession, Use And/Or Distribution Of Illicit And Other Unsanctioned Drugs In Schools* when it met on 30-31 March 2000.

Enhanced protocols will provide a consistent message nationally, especially to parents, about how schools will respond and what help is available if a student does become involved in a drug related incident at school.

The Commonwealth has consulted the MCEETYA Taskforce on a range of supporting measures to underpin the National Framework. The implementation of these measures has progressed as follows:

- A satellite broadcast on 22 March 2000 targeted teachers and doctors across Australia to promote a partnership approach to drug education and drug issues management within school and local communities and to disseminate information about Commonwealth government policy and initiatives relating to the goal ‘no illicit drugs in schools’.
- An Internet site will be developed in 2000 to disseminate the national framework approach to enhanced protocols and to provide other relevant information for all interested parties..
 - : This will include a descriptive bibliography intended to ensure school staff, and others in the community including parents, are able to readily identify and draw upon the full range of suitable resources available to support them in drug education and the handling of drug use.
- Enhancements to the Australian Drug Information Network will be made on an ongoing basis commencing in 2000 to ensure schools and parents have ready access to information on services that can assist students with drug related problems.
- Educational videos, CD ROMs and resource booklets will be developed in 2000, and ideally distributed to all schools in the first half of 2001, to assist teachers and other school staff to identify, prevent and respond to unsanctioned drug use and to work with students to increase their understanding of the harm caused by drugs and their resilience to resist drug use.
- Phased implementation of local school-community drug summits is planned to commence in 2000 and rollout over four years to 2002-03.
 - : The summits aim to bring school staff, parents and key community members together to encourage stronger, broader and more integrated community engagement and support in addressing illicit and unsanctioned drug use by young people. The summits will also provide a vehicle to disseminate the National Framework for protocols for drugs in schools.

This approach hinges on strengthened school–community partnerships. Videos of the satellite broadcast, detailed above, will be available for the summits.

- : The Commonwealth has written to heads of government and non-government school jurisdictions in each State/Territory to invite them to submit a collaborative, cross-sectoral State/Territory proposal for funding for local school community drug summits
- : The model for the implementation of these summits will allow schools sufficient flexibility to meet the demands of a range of local contexts.

Reporting

All projects funded under the National School Drug Education Strategy are subject to a contractual requirement to provide satisfactory and timely reports on their outcomes.

Review and Evaluation

National School Drug Education Strategy

An evaluation process will review the National School Drug Education Strategy in terms of achievement against stated guiding principles, objectives and outcomes.

It is anticipated that the evaluation of the National School Drug Education Strategy will include the development of an evaluation framework during 2001 for implementation in 2002 and to be completed in 2003. This will feed into other planned Commonwealth evaluations under the National Drug Strategic Framework.

The national strategic project relating to the identification of, and guidelines for implementing performance management processes for State and Territory School Drug Education Projects will contribute to the development of an evaluation framework for the National School Drug Education Strategy.

COAG agreed “Tough on Drugs in Schools” measures

The Commonwealth Department of Finance and Administration (DOFA) is managing the evaluation of the COAG initiatives, including “Tough on Drugs in Schools” administered by DETYA.

The Terms of Reference for the evaluation require it to cover the three main components of the measures announced in the COAG communiqué of 9 April 1999, namely:

- Tough on Drugs in the Community
- Tough on Drugs in Schools
- Tough on Supply of Drugs

The key purpose of the evaluation is to inform future policy directions by advising on the effectiveness of the package in:

- Contributing to arresting the growth in drug use;
- Preventing the uptake of illicit drugs by new users; and
- Reducing damage to individuals and the cost to the community.

State and Territory Activities

As stated earlier, all governments recognise that there is a real need to provide a safe environment for young people, including school students, and to address parents' concerns about the impact of drugs on their families. In this context, States and Territories have been supporting and implementing their own school drug education policies and programmes, although some jurisdictions are at a more advanced stage than others. Notable initiatives include the *Turning the Tide* initiative in Victoria and Western Australia's *School Drug Education Project*.

Linkages

The National School Drug Education Strategy comes under the National Illicit Drug Strategy. DETYA consults with the Australian National Council on Drugs and is a member of the Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs.

DETYA also liaises with the Department of Health and Aged Care and other Commonwealth Departments to ensure links are made with other drug initiatives including the tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug campaigns and the Australian Drug Information Network.

Meetings of representatives from government and non-government education sectors involved in school drug education are held twice yearly to share information and to disseminate information on national initiatives.

ACRONYMS

ADIN – Australian Drug Information Network

ANCD – Australian National Council on Drugs

COAG – Council of Australian Governments

DETYA – Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs

DHAC – Department of Health and Aged Care

DOFA – Department of Finance and Administration

IGCD – Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs

MCDS – Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy

MCEETYA – Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs

NACSE – National Advisory Committee on School Drug Education

NSDES - National School Drug Education Strategy